

Several prominent members of the community came out to support the students, including Board of Supervisor member Ken Reed, School Board member Thomas Reed, Town of Leesburg Mayor Kristen Umstattd and Congressman Frank Wolf, who served as keynote speaker.

Wolf told of his adversities from childhood and being teased as a stutterer and poor student. He told the students their adversity would determine their success, rather their character and ability to overcome.

"Do not be afraid to take on tough issues," Wolf told the students.

The Beat the Odds program will hold a special event June 13 at the Tally Ho in Leesburg from 5 to 7:30 p.m. The event will serve as both a fundraiser and an opportunity for the community to hear the stories from this year's winners.

[From the Leesburg Today, May 24, 2013]

BAR AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS TO HELP STUDENTS CONTINUE BEATING THE ODDS

"Everything has a way out. You have the choice to keep going."

Those were the words of Vineetha Thekkel, a graduating senior at Tuscarora High School, but it was a message shared by all four students awarded scholarships through the Loudoun Bar Association's Beat the Odds program during a ceremony at the historic courthouse in Leesburg Thursday night.

In its ninth year, the program provides financial support to college-bound students who have overcome remarkably challenging, often tragic circumstances. The annual awards ceremonies—attended by relatives, teachers and members of the Bar—are known for their emotional rollercoaster ride of pride in the students' accomplishments and sadness at the situations the teens lived through. The tales bring tears to the eyes of even the most experienced lawyers in the room. The wider public will have the opportunity to hear the stories of this year's honorees and past scholarship winners during a special June 13 event at the Tally Ho Theatre in Leesburg.

This year's winners, while coming from decidedly different backgrounds, told similar stories involving domestic violence, financial struggles and lost youth.

At age 14, Jonathan "Cory" Dickey said he stopped his alcoholic father from choking his mother and then had to start working to support her and his siblings when his father left. "Dad got off easy," the Loudoun County High School senior said. Food stamps and Social Security benefits for his mother, who is unable to work because of a medical condition, helped, but not enough to hold off a foreclosure. His hard work has paid off with a chance to continue his education in college. "It's going to help me in so many ways," he said of the \$2,000 scholarship award.

Park View High School's Shannon Hayes' parents divorced when she was 8, after her mother felt that her father's alcoholism made it too dangerous to live together. Two years later her mother became ill and her father returned to help. Although the relationship with her father healed and a strong bond was formed, he died when she was 12. "He was my best friend," Hayes said. It was her father's wish that she succeed that has inspired her to persevere a degree in biochemistry at Penn State and a career in genetic engineering. "He is with me everyday. He is my angel."

Thekkel said she flew to the U.S. March 18, 2009, with her deaf father and a mother who did not speak English. It was at the airport making phone calls to try to find a ride where the then-13-year-old realized, "I had to be the adult in the family." Once settled in

a Leesburg townhouse, she went around to area businesses to collect job applications for her parents who now work three jobs. Although the halls of Tuscarora High School presented a completely new experience for the first-generation immigrant, it was at school where she found support from teachers who understood the challenges she faced.

"I loved going to school. That was the only place where I could stay away from the tough times," she said. "I was forced to become an adult at a very young age." With the help of her \$2,500 scholarship, she will attend Mount Vernon Nazarene University in Ohio with the goal of working as a missionary doctor.

Loudoun County's High School's Leanna Moron received the largest scholarship—the \$6,000 Beat the Odds Award. She described her story as "complex," involving family financial struggles, a foreclosure, alcoholic and abusive family members, "and tremendous heartache and pain."

At times life may seem too challenging and hopeless, she said, but with determination you can get through it. She found education as "a way out" and will graduate in the top 10 percent of her class. She will pursue a nursing degree at Penn State.

Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judge Pamela L. Brooks led the ceremony and U.S. Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-VA-10) was the keynote speaker, telling students of his struggles growing up in Philadelphia as a picked-on, stuttering youth and poor student. He urged them to continue to be willing to pay the price to do the right things and to thank God for the adversity that helps make them better people.

Attorney Matt Snow, co-chairman of the Bar's Beat the Odds Committee, encourages residents to attend a special forum at the Tally Ho, 5-7:30 p.m. Saturday, June 13, to gain a better understanding of the program and the impact it is having on the lives of the students. Attendees are advised to bring tissues to wipe away tears; and may bring their checkbooks to support the program.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ASSESSMENT ACCURACY AND IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2013

HON. THOMAS E. PETRI

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 3, 2013

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, as Congress considers the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act this year, we have an obligation to listen closely to the students, parents, and educators that we represent to ensure that our efforts result in responsible and pragmatic improvements. While we have made great strides in the areas of assessment and accountability over the last nine years, this reauthorization provides a critical opportunity to learn from our experiences and fine-tune the law.

One example of a lesson my constituents have learned, and have vigorously shared with me, is that we should be encouraging states to move towards better assessment models. As I have met with educators over the past several years, one of the primary concerns that I have heard is that the state assessment fails to provide information of value to educators and administrators. Even more disturbing, it often takes four to six months before scores are returned to schools, which leaves little or no time for teachers to use the infor-

mation to address student performance before they advance to the next grade.

However, I believe there is a sensible solution that Congress can adopt to address these concerns and give states more options in assessment design. Today, working with Representative G.K. Butterfield, I am introducing the bipartisan Assessment Accuracy and Improvement Act of 2013 to give states the option to use adaptive testing as their statewide assessment measuring reading, math, and science to fulfill No Child Left Behind requirements. I believe that this legislation will give states the ability to truly track the academic growth of every child and provide more accurate information to teachers, parents and school administrators through the use of an adaptive test.

For those who may be unfamiliar with adaptive testing, it is a test that changes in response to previously-asked questions. For example, if a student answers a question correctly, the test presents a question of increased difficulty. If a student answers incorrectly, the test presents a question of decreased difficulty. As you can see, an adaptive test customizes itself to a student's actual level of performance with a great degree of accuracy.

Giving states the flexibility to use an adaptive test and to ask questions outside of grade level will improve the accuracy of student assessment and enable educators to target appropriate instruction for each child based on performance at, above, or below grade level. In addition, using an adaptive test over time will allow accurate measurement of the performance growth of each individual student.

In Wisconsin, hundreds of school districts currently use their own funds to participate in adaptive testing in addition to the state assessment required by NCLB. Educators and administrators appreciate the diagnostic information it yields and the efficiency that it provides. I believe that school districts nationally are already "speaking with their wallets" by spending scarce resources to voluntarily participate in this testing because it provides valuable information that the state assessment does not.

Mr. Speaker, adaptive testing is one of the keys to putting the 'child' back into No Child Left Behind. I hope that our colleagues will join us in this pragmatic and responsible improvement to the law as we work towards a bipartisan reauthorization this year.

RECOGNIZING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHARLESTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HON. JIM GERLACH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 3, 2013

Mr. GERLACH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Charlestown Historical Society on the occasion of its 40th anniversary.

The Charlestown Historical Society was founded in 1973 at the home of Ms. Betty Stonorov to discover and maintain the rich historical heritage of Charlestown Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania. The Society currently boasts over 160 members and is led by President John W. Pittock, who has served in that capacity since 2007. The Society meets